LECTURE 9: RAIL FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION

DISPLAYS

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MIT
OBSERVATIONS: US AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- Technology
- Operations
SOME OBSERVATIONS

◆ Rail is big in the US: 36% of freight miles are by rail
◆ Week of August 21, 2004: 339,749 car loadings
  ◆ Coal: 136,151
  ◆ Agricultural products: 37,765
  ◆ Metallic ores and minerals: 33,489
  ◆ Motor vehicles and equipment: 23,621
◆ Up 1% from comparable week last year
IN ADDITION…

◆ Intermodal (week of 8/21/04)
  ◆ Trailers: 56,357
  ◆ Containers: 160,792
  ◆ Total: 217,149
◆ Up 9.5% from comparable week last year
OTHER COUNTRIES

- Rail freight much less important; trucks dominate
  - Europe
  - Japan
  - Latin America

- Some exceptions
  - Canada (like US)
  - South Africa (“heavy haul”)
  - Australia (“heavy haul”)
TECHNOLOGY

- Steel wheel/steel rails
- Diesel-powered locomotives
- A wide variety of freight car types
  - General purpose (e.g., box cars)…
  - Special purpose (e.g., auto rack cars)

- High fixed cost/low variable cost industry. Must build a lot of special purpose infrastructure